

Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
Human Rights Studies Master of Arts

**Moving Beyond Access: Integration of Syrian Refugee Students into Turkish Public
Schools in the Bursa Province**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

February 2018

ABSTRACT

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In the context of contemplating the interplay between public education and refugee integration in a host country setting, this qualitative multi-site case study is designed to reveal the kinds of challenges and needs of the school staff regarding the inclusion of Syrian students in public schools, and the types of strategies they employed to overcome these challenges. By examining the practices and policies of three Turkish primary public schools located in the city center of Bursa province through 20 interviews and 11 classroom observations, the underlying goals of this study were to determine the preparedness of schools for meeting the needs of refugee learners and to contribute to the literature on education in emergencies. The study finds that the school staff were faced with multifaceted challenges that included: language, communication and socio-economic barriers; lack of support from the government; and behavioral challenges among Syrian students. Further, the findings document that teaching and learning approaches that respect a range of pedagogical practices, mixed seating arrangements, balanced grade placement, and group activities, all contribute to the socio-cultural integration of refugee students. The study provides evidence that even though the conditions were not given to provide smooth integration of refugee students into schools, strong school leaders together with caring and dedicated teachers and an engaged community can find ways to tackle challenges and create positive learning environments for all members of the school community that foster the larger integration process. Amidst the phasing out of the Temporary Education Centers (TECs) by the end of 2019, this study's findings point to the critical need for additional teacher training, particularly on second-language acquisition strategies, harmful practices in refugee education, psychosocial support, and inclusive classroom management skills.

Key Terms: refugee integration, local integration, inclusive policy, social cohesion, quality education, urban Syrian refugees, Turkish primary public schools, challenges of and strategies for inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my thesis advisor Dr. Mary Mendenhall, who offered unwavering emotional support and technical guidance on my research and writing throughout the completion of this thesis. Her motivation, positive comments, enthusiasm, affectionate hugs, and high expectations of me were sometimes all that kept me going. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right the direction whenever she thought I needed it. This research project would not have been possible without her mentorship and expertise in refugee education and qualitative methods. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my thesis.

I am also very grateful to Dr. Felisa Tibbitts and Lara Nettelfield for their rapid replies to my “one quick question” and for always being available whenever I needed their advice. I wish to thank all the amazing faculty members of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University for their guidance, giving me the tools to defend and promote human rights, and pushing my boundaries, especially Elazar Barkan, Inga Winkler, Jo Becker, Michael Bochenek and Mila Rosenthal. I also wish to thank Kristina Eberbach for helping me navigate the master’s program and suggesting faculty members and courses at Teachers College. Additionally, I thank my friends Jihae Cha and Desiree Halpern at Teachers College for providing assistance during the data coding process.

I must thank Dean Brooks, the Director of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, for his guidance on my thesis topic, allowing me to work on diverse projects pertinent to the field of education in emergencies during the internship that broadened my knowledge, and always reminding me that my thesis should come first. I also thank Zeynep M. Turkmen-Sanduvac (Mavi Kalem Association), Marina Lopez-Anselme (Refugee Education

Trust International) and Joel E. Reyes (World Bank) for providing feedback and invaluable insights on my research given their expertise in refugee education in Turkey.

I am also grateful to the Bursa Provincial Directorate of National Education for granting local permission in order to carry out the fieldwork. I offer my sincerest thanks to the participant administrators and teachers, who shared with me their experiences and perspectives. I am grateful for your insights, honesty, openness and hospitality.

Finally, I must thank my family for their enduring unconditional love, support and patience. Special thanks to my angel, role model, mother Bengu Ertuk for her selflessness and caring, providing ongoing support, taking the time off her busy schedule visiting the Provincial Directorate to gather information on the needed documents for the local permission and driving me to the research sites. I thank my little sister Ecem Ulucinar Ozsel first for being my sister, I would not have wished for a better one, and second for her patience as I was often busy and unavailable due to my schoolwork to offer my guidance or have typical sister talks. I thank my father Ilhan Ulucinar, who motivated me and kept a sense of humor when I had lost mine; my mother-in-law Faiza Mostafa, who kept cooking for us when I had no time even to eat; my loving husband Ali Mostafa, who gave me all the moral support and space I needed to finish my thesis. Without all of you, this thesis project would not have become a reality.

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ACRONYMNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| APA | American Psychological Association |
| EU | European Union |
| INEE | Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| MoNE | Ministry of National Education |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| PDNE | Provincial Directorate of National Education |
| PICTES | Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System |
| TECs | Temporary Education Centers |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |

Chapter I: Introduction

Research Problem and Context

The Syrian crisis that began in March 2011 uprooted more than half of the Syrian population and externally displaced over 5.5 million Syrians, who primarily reside in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq (UNHCR, 2017a). Now in its seventh year, the protracted Syrian refugee crisis has put an immense strain on all host countries but more so on the countries of first asylum with limited resources and infrastructure. Being the top refugee-hosting country in the world, Turkey to date hosts 3.3 million Syrian refugees (Ministry of Interior, 2017; UNHCR, 2017a). Turkey is the most affected country by the Syrian refugee crisis as the country so far has spent \$25 billion to address the needs of Syrians (Cupolo, 2017a). What is more challenging is the fact that over one million Syrians in Turkey are of school-going age (Ministry of Interior, 2017).

Given the magnitude of the Syrian crisis and ever-increasing numbers of Syrians pouring into the country, Turkey has faced multifaceted challenges to address their diverse needs. While only 228,000 Syrian refugees are accommodated in high-quality government-run camps, more than 93% are dispersed across the country and mixed with the local population (Ministry of Interior, 2017). Although urban refugees, who reside outside of refugee camps, may exercise the human right to freedom of movement and have better chances to find employment, they often become the target of xenophobia, and face social exclusion and harassment (Mendenhall et al., 2017a). Unfortunately, the situation in Turkey is no different. There is a noticeable climate of racism and heightened negative attitudes toward urban Syrian refugees that is fueled by Turkish society's strong attachment to the value of nationalism.

Nonetheless, the Turkish case is unique for at least two reasons, which distinguish Turkey from other refugee-hosting asylum countries. First is the country's integration policy. In stark contrast to the policies of most countries of first asylum, Turkey opened the door, albeit slightly, to local integration as a durable solution¹ for its Syrian refugee population. Even though permanent settlement has historically been permitted either to European refugees, owing to the Turkish reservation to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, or to foreigners and refugees of Turkish descent as stipulated by 1934 Law of Settlement (Council of Ministers, 1934), the government of Turkey officially initiated the local integration process for Syrian refugees in 2013 when it adopted the "6458: Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (Ministry of Interior, 2014; Icduygu & Simsek, 2016). It is important to stress the significance of this phenomenon in the history of the Republic of Turkey because even though Syrians do not meet either criterion mentioned above, they have been legally given a prospect to locally settle. Moreover, the Turkish president publicly announced in July 2016 that Syrians would eventually be granted citizenship, underscoring the political will for local integration (Aljazeera, 2016).

Second is the country's refugee education policy. On 23 September 2014, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) issued a circular titled "Education Services for Foreigners 2014/21" that granted all school-aged Syrian children full-fledged access to enroll in Turkish public schools alongside Turkish peers in the same classrooms (MoNE, 2014).² To facilitate the integration of Syrian children into the Turkish society, the MoNE announced that all Temporary Education Centers (TECs; non-formal education programs that employ Syrian volunteer teachers who instruct courses in Arabic) will be phased out by the end of 2018-2019 academic year and

¹ UNHCR promotes three durable solutions to resolve refugee situations, namely, local integration in the country of asylum, voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, and third country resettlement.

² The policy also granted access to public education for other asylum seeker and refugee children residing in Turkey.

that all school-aged Syrians will be gradually transitioned to public schools (MoNE, 2016b; Beyer, 2017). It is in this context that this paper examines the implementation of these integration policies at the school levels by focusing on the role that Turkish public schools play in the larger integration process, with a special emphasis on inclusive policies and practices in mainstream primary schools. This thesis argues that even though the conditions were not given to provide smooth integration of refugee students into schools, strong school leaders together with caring and dedicated teachers can find ways to foster the integration process.

Research Objectives and Significance

With the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey, most discussions and academic interest have been around the periphery of refugee education and were oriented towards identifying barriers to access, assessing educational policies and programs, and examining the quality of education offered to Syrian students in camps, TECs and/or public school settings (see for example, Human Rights Watch, 2015; Bircan & Sunata 2015; Seydi, 2014; Aras & Yasun, 2016). At the global level, previous studies about refugee education and integration focus mostly on the African continent and/or in resettlement contexts. There has been to date little attention to the inclusion of refugee students in public schools and its implications on the integration process in the host country. This is most likely because the inclusion of refugees within national education systems is a relatively new policy, launched by UNHCR in 2012. Since the issuance of the 2014/21 circular, there has been a growing shift of attention from access to quality education for Syrian children in Turkey to the challenges of integration at public school levels (Seker & Sirkeci, 2015; Saritas et al., 2016; Er & Bayindir, 2015; Tosten et al., 2017).

Given that soon public schools will be the only formal educational option for over one million Syrian students, more research in the field of education in emergencies on the readiness levels of public schools, school practices, perceptions and experiences of the school staff are crucial simply because they are the frontline implementers of educational policies. Their practices determine the success of such policies, and their own identity, perceptions and attitudes towards refugees facilitate or impede the processes of socio-cultural integration, acculturation and adaptation (Seker and Sirkeci, 2015; Levine & Lezotte, 2001; Wrigley, 2000; Walker et. al., 2004; Mendenhall et al. 2017b).

That said, the objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to contribute to the knowledge in the evolving literature on the challenges, experiences, and needs of Turkish school staff about integrating refugee students from Syria into their schools. Although there is a growing interest in recent years about issues of refugee integration into national education systems, insufficient attention to date is paid regarding how schools and school staff overcome (or attempt to overcome) integration challenges and foster the socio-cultural integration of refugee students in the Turkey context. Second goal, is to fill this knowledge gap in the literature by highlighting classroom practices of teachers, practices of administrators and school policies. Third, is to voice the narratives of the school staff regarding the support they need from the authorities to better integrate refugee students into their schools and communities.

Overall, this type of research does not only have a significance for the Turkey context, it also has a larger global significance for the field of education in emergencies in terms of what we are learning from the Syrian crisis, and how the lessons learned would help policy makers, practitioners, and donors to scrutinize their priorities. It must be noted at the outset that this is an

advocacy-driven research project calling for better preparing schools, teachers and local communities for refugee integration.

Research Questions

With these goals in mind, this research study seeks to answer the following research questions: *What kinds of challenges do educators face in integrating Syrian refugee students into their schools? What kinds of strategies do educators utilize to overcome these challenges and to foster the socio-cultural integration process? What kind of support do they need from the authorities in order to better integrate Syrian students into their schools and society?* To answer these questions, the province of Bursa located in the northwest was selected as a case study for three interconnected reasons. First, unlike other provinces with a dense refugee population, the city has not established any TECs but instead directed all school-aged Syrians towards national schools (Coskun & Emin, 2016). For that reason, the Bursa province has “the highest enrollment rate of Syrians in public schools” across the country (Coskun & Emin, 2016, p. 21). Second, despite having substantial numbers of Syrians (about 134,500 registered as of 21 December 2017) (Ministry of Interior, 2017), the city lacks the presence of international/ local educational non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating to support and meet the needs of the local and refugee communities. Lacking such crucial actors on the ground means that the great bulk of responsibility is placed onto the school staff and local community, and that more support is needed from the government. And third, most studies have been conducted overwhelmingly in Istanbul or border provinces, whereas the Bursa province has not been a subject of academic research, to the best of my knowledge.

Key Concepts and Terms

In refugee integration literature, the main controversial issue has been the definition of integration itself. This complex situation is perhaps best described in the words of Robinson (1998): “integration is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most” (cited in Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167). For the purposes of this study, refugee integration is conceptualized using UNHCR’s definition of local integration as:

a dynamic and multifaceted *two-way process*, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including *preparedness* on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding *readiness* on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population, comprising three distinct but inter-related legal, economic, and social and cultural dimensions (UNHCR, EXCOM, 2005, emphasis added).

At times, integration and inclusion may be used interchangeably in the context of national education systems to mean more than the physical inclusion of children in schools; it is the adaptation of students into their new environments and systems. When discussing school strategies and policies in the context of inclusive education, the focus will be exclusively on the inclusion of refugee learners.³ Psychosocial support is defined as “processes and actions that promote the holistic well-being of people in their social world” (INEE, 2010, p. 121). While social integration broadly refers to the process in which refugees relate to and function in various spheres of the social environment in the host country, socio-cultural integration refers to “learning of culture, behavioral adequacy and exchanges,” which is measured primarily by the degree of the fluency in the host language (Seker & Sirkeci, 2015, p. 124).

In the Turkish context, refugee integration is deliberately replaced by “harmonization,” which is interpreted as a two-way process of adaptation, the one that focuses mainly on the

³ Inclusive (or mainstream) education is an umbrella term that refers to the inclusion of all learners, including children with disabilities and refugee backgrounds, and other vulnerable groups of children in national education systems.

socio-cultural dimension while excluding any guarantees for the prospects of naturalization (Ministry of Interior, 2015). The way to foster this adaptation process is, as outlined on the website for the Directorate General of Migration Management, through improving refugees' self-reliance by providing courses on "political structure, language, law system, culture and history" of the Turkish Republic (Ibid.).

Roadmap

The remainder of this thesis is divided into five sections. Chapter II provides a brief overview of the transition of Turkish refugee and education policies from segregation to integration. Chapter III presents a review of the literature on the linkage between education and integration, the predominant experiences and needs of refugee students at public schools, barriers to inclusive education and teacher practices that aim to overcome barriers. Chapter IV describes in detail the research methods and methodology employed to undertake the field research. Chapter V reports the findings from the primary data collected via classroom observations and interviews. Chapter VI concludes by summarizing the key findings, discussing the current shortfalls in public schools for the promotion of integration, and providing recommendations for policy makers and educators for future research.

Chapter II: Background

Turkish Refugee Policy Environment: From Encampment to Local Integration

Turkey has ratified the 1967 Protocol on the condition that the geographical limitation of the 1951 Refugee Convention will be maintained, meaning that the conventional protection is granted only to those from Europe (UNHCR, n.d.). In the face of a humanitarian crisis in neighboring Syria, Turkey immediately opened its doors to those fleeing from the war, based on

the belief that the conflict would be ceased soon. The generous open-door policy, followed by the Turkish government's Syrian refugee crisis management raised its profile and made Turkey the pivotal actor in the international arena. Although at first refugees were contained in camps near the Syrian border, those who arrived by mid-2012 were allowed to settle in border provinces as the number of arrivals rapidly exceeded the capacity of the camps (Kirisici, 2014). Because Syrians were not from Europe, they were not classified as refugees, but instead referred to as guests or foreigners, thus lacking a legal identity and status. Despite the legal issues and for the purposes of this paper, Syrians will be regarded as refugees because they are in a refugee-like situation.

Following the open-door policy, the government of Turkey over time has taken progressive steps, albeit incrementally. The first short-term policy incorporating a rights-based approach to the arrivals of Syrians en masse was initiated in April of 2013, with the establishment of the Temporary Protection regime, which identified the scope and implementation of the international protection to non-European nationals. Under this regime, their legal status made them the beneficiaries of temporary protection. Conflicts in Aleppo in the course of 2013, however, generated a greater influx of Syrians into Turkey and led to a further increase in the numbers of urban and rural refugees (Icduygu & Simsek, 2016). From having six refugee camps to host 7,000 Syrian refugees in the course of 2011, Turkey established 22 camps by the end of 2014 to accommodate more than one million Syrians (Kirisici, 2014). Considering the ever-increasing refugee arrivals, the Turkish authorities realized that the nature of the Syrian crisis had become protracted and that Syrians would stay much longer than anticipated even if the war in Syria were to end tomorrow. Upon this realization and the UNHCR's shifted emphasis from repatriation to local integration (UNHCR, 2012), the government of Turkey began to adopt

medium-term integration policies, having its respective ministries issue decrees, circulars and regulations.

That said, Turkey's first integration policy was initiated in 2013 with the entry of aforementioned Law on Foreigners that took effect in October 2014 (Ministry of Interior, 2014). Based on Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners, Temporary Protection Regulation was established for Syrians that outlined their obligations and rights⁴ (Ministry of Interior, 2014). However, the emergence of ISIS in summer 2014 not only caused another massive wave of Syrian refugees pouring onto Turkish soil (UNICEF, 2015) but also drove most of the educated and highly skilled Syrians to leave the country for Europe in the hopes of seeking better livelihoods (Kaymaz & Kadkoy, 2016). Hence, in order to prevent further brain drain of Syrians, to ameliorate their livelihoods and to facilitate their economic integration, the Turkish government decided to strengthen the temporary protection regime for Syrians by taking a longer-term policy stance.

To that end, the government adopted a harmonization framework to facilitate their integration in 2015. Although the framework explicitly removes any possible legal connotation or implication of local integration, recent statistics show that more than 12,000 Syrians, most of whom are highly educated, so far have been granted Turkish citizenship (Tafolar, 2017). This promising state practice signals that local integration through legal citizenship is indeed underway and that education for refugees has been used as a facilitating vehicle and predictor of the local integration process (Sabah, 2016). Last but not least, on 11 January 2016, "the Regulation on Work Permit of Refugees Under Temporary Protection" was adopted (Council of Ministers, 2016). This regulation, in principle, granted all working-age registered Syrians under

⁴ For example, the right to residence in provinces (Article 24), access to health, education and employment (Article 26, 27, 29, respectively), and other services.

temporary protection, who have been residing in Turkey for at least six months, legal access to the formal labor market in the provinces in which they are registered (Council of Ministers, 2016).

Refugee Education in Turkey: From Segregated Education to Mainstream Schooling

Since early 2011 and until late 2013, refugee education for school-aged Syrians was mainly provided in or near Turkish refugee camps, with the sole aim of facilitating the repatriation process. In response to the question about education for Syrian refugees, the then-Minister Dincer explicitly stressed the purpose of the Turkish response to refugee education on 31 July 2012 as:

We are in further preparation to provide education in temporary education centers in containers. In the past years, they have been receiving education there also. In our plan, each course will be delivered in Arabic in accordance with our own curriculum. We are not neglecting their education, but we are trying to do this in a manner that is distant to fostering the stay of the families in Turkey (Dunya Bulteni, 2012 cited in Seydi, 2014, pg. 275).

On 3 October 2012, the former Minister Dincer further explained that the reason the MoNE “did not put effort into teaching Syrian children Turkish” and did not open the doors of public schools were based on the belief that Syrians would return to their education systems in the near future. (Seydi, 2014, pp. 275-76). Despite the plans, the increase in numbers of urban refugees demanded an adoption of a set of policies to meet the educational needs of Syrian children. On 26 September 2013, the MoNE issued a comprehensive circular outlining the provision of education for Syrians residing both in camps and outside (MoNE, 2013). The circular placed the responsibility to coordinate, supervise and provide educational opportunities on the MoNE, and provided a pathway for tertiary education for Syrian students who have passed the Baccalaureate exam in Syria to enroll in Turkish universities. Along with this circular, Turkish language

courses began to be provided in and near camps. Two educational pathways were identified for Syrian students. First was the formal education in Turkish public schools, which was reserved only for those who registered with the authorities and obtained residency permits (MoNE, 2013, para. 9). The other option was non-formal education at TECs for those who lacked the residency permit or were interested in receiving education in Arabic by Syrian volunteer teachers.

However, the number of Syrians in general and urban refugees in particular continued to rapidly escalate throughout the years, which brought increased pressure by the international community on Turkey. In response, Turkey began to adapt to the changing nature of the crisis and to address the needs of urban refugee children by adopting longer-term planning. For example, the MoNE issued another circular named “Education Services for Foreigners 2014/21” on 23 September 2014 that granted access to public schools and removed bureaucratic barriers for enrollment such as the residency permit (MoNE, 2014). In the summer of 2016, the MoNE announced a revised roadmap for Syrian students’ education that required all Syrian students at first, fifth, and ninth grade levels to enroll in Turkish public schools, as of 2016-2017 academic year (MoNE, 2016b). Taken altogether, these efforts translated into increased enrollment rates of Syrian students in public schools (see Table 1 below). The MoNE has also increased the quantity of Turkish language courses at community education centers (Halk Egitim Merkezleri) to facilitate the transition of students into Turkish public schools. This circular shifted the refugee education policy from repatriation to local integration.

Table 1 : Public School Enrollment Rates of Syrian Students

| Academic Years | # of Syrian Students Enrolled in Turkish Public Schools | # of School-aged Syrian Students in Turkey |
|----------------|---|--|
| 2014-2015 | 40.000 | 756.000 |
| 2015-2016 | 62.357 | 834.842 |
| 2016-2017 | 201.505 | 833.039 |
| 2017-2018 | 362.801 | 976.200 |

Source: General Directorate for Lifelong Learning, Department of Migration & Education in Emergency, December 2017

Another important development in refugee integration and education was the deal between European Union (EU) and Turkey signed in March 2016. As per the agreements, Turkey would strengthen its border control to prevent migration flows to Europe, and in exchange the EU would, inter alia, provide financial support (3 billion euro) to Turkey in order to address the needs of refugees, particularly in the areas of employment and education (Cupolo, 2017b). Among the projects and programs implemented under this deal,⁵ Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES) is the most relevant for this study. Signed between the MoNE and the EU on 3 October 2016 under the framework of the “Financial Opportunity for Syrian Refugees in Turkey,” PICTES was aimed at increasing access to education, improving the quality of education in both TECs and public schools and strengthening the institutional capacities of the educational facilities and the professional capacities of the school personnel through in-service trainings (PICTES, 2016). Under this project, after going through intense pre-service trainings, 4200 Turkish contracted teachers were deployed and began teaching the Turkish language to Syrian students in TECs and public schools as of December 2016 (MoNE, 2016a). Additional 2000 Turkish teachers were deployed in 2017

⁵ Some of these projects and programs include conditional cash transfers programs and constructions of schools. For more information, visit <https://pictes.meb.gov.tr/izleme>.

(MoNE, 2017). With these shifted policies, public schools began to play a greater role in the integration process.

Chapter III: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter will begin by establishing the nexus between refugee education and integration. Next, it will identify key literature on the experiences of urban refugee children with the purpose of outlining a) their distinct needs; b) the most prevalent challenges faced both by state teachers and refugee students in mainstream schools; and c) the strategies used by state teachers (or schools in general) in addressing these pressing challenges. Then, it will introduce the overarching theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this project.

Refugee Education and Integration

Education is a precondition for the realization of human rights. On the one hand, it can prevent child labor, early marriages, marginalization and social exclusion of the vulnerable groups such as refugees. On the other hand, it is a key to sustainable development and social progress. The goal of education is, therefore, to promote cognitive, socio-emotional and creative development and skills of the learners in order for them to effectively participate in their societies. This fundamental human right of everyone is enshrined in core international human rights instruments that promote the inclusion of all learners in education irrespective of legal status and backgrounds (see Appendix 1).

Education also plays a key facilitating role in the refugee integration process, be it in host country or resettlement contexts. To cite a few examples, Ager and Strang (2008) posit that

refugee integration is determined by the degree of access to services such as employment, housing, education and health. In Goldlust & Richmond's model, which studies all types of migration in Canada, education was concluded being "the most important determinant" and a facilitating factor of economic and social integration when adult refugees had high-levels of education prior to arrival or when their children received education in the given country (1974, p. 205). Similarly, Dryden-Peterson (2016) argues that the process of social integration of refugees in the resettlement countries depends on the education that refugees received in the countries of asylum, adding that this process is accelerated when refugee education is focused on content mastery rather than language acquisition; the learning is participatory and student-centered rather than teacher-centered lecture; the school environment is non-discriminatory and bullying-free. Although true that content mastery must be prioritized, the importance of acquiring fluency in the host country's national language cannot be overstated because the language plays an essential role in the processes of socio-cultural and economic integration and the continuation of education in the respective country (Rutter, 2013; Craig, 2013; Seker and Sirkeci, 2015). Many scholars agree that the integration process is fostered especially when refugee students are allowed to follow the national curriculum of the host country and are instructed in the host country's official language in public schools alongside the national students (Waters & Leblanc, 2005; Mendenhall et. al., 2015, 2017a). This agreement and importance of inclusion of refugees in public institutions is echoed in UNHCR's 2010-2012 Education Strategy and was reaffirmed in its 2012-2016 Education Strategy (UNHCR, 2009, 2012). Indeed, public schools can create a social network and serve as a platform for social and cultural harmonization between the refugees and locals.

Important to note is that successful refugee integration into public institutions such as schools requires a joint effort between all groups and is influenced by numerous factors, including: the mutual acceptance and recognition of each other's co-existence; the degree of communication and coordination between all stakeholders; technical capacity and experience of school staff; physical capacity of schools to accommodate new student populations; the level of autonomy of school administrators; and technical and financial capacity of and support from the government (Mendenhall et al., 2015; Hovil & Dryden-Peterson, 2003).

Equally important, social cohesion programs between the locals and refugees must be established because it is common that refugees face discrimination and xenophobic attitudes by the locals, including the national teachers and students (Mendenhall et al., 2015). In the absence of social cohesion programs that aim to foster positive intergroup relations and when “sudden and dramatic demographic changes” occur in communities, the locals develop negative attitudes and fear toward refugees and migrants, and these negative views of the community in turn “trickle down to the schools and teachers” (Valdes, 2001; Wringley, 2000 cited in Walker et. al., 2004, p. 133). Teachers’ perceptions and attitudes are highly influenced by “the norms and values both of the larger society and of the educational settings in which the interactions take place” (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002 cited in Walker et. al., 2004, p. 131). That is, even though teachers are part of the educated populace, societal values and school culture may affect their views and attitudes toward refugee children and refugees in general.

On the contrary, if teachers are motivated and well-trained, they can help refugee students develop a sense of belonging, teach them the culture of the society (norms, rules, etc.), develop their capacities to build relationships with the peers, help them acquire fluency in the national language while enhancing their students’ skills and competencies to thrive in the future

(Craig, 2013; Seker and Sirkeci, 2015). School administrators also play a crucial role in refugee integration since they have duties to guide teachers, monitor their practices and ensure that no discrimination or bias is tolerated in school (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Research finds that the negative attitudes of school administrators towards students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have a significant effect on teachers' behaviors towards minority children, and thus influencing the students' success in schools (Levine & Lezotte, 2001; Wrigley, 2000; Walker et. al., 2004).

Needs and Experiences of Refugee Children

A refugee is by definition a person who was forced to flee and crossed international borders, often under harsh conditions; this is a traumatic phenomenon for adults but more so for children. UNHCR reports that refugee children miss out on average of three to four years of schooling (UNHCR, 2016, 2017b). While only 61% of refugee children have a chance to enroll in primary schools, as low as 23% have access to secondary education (UNHCR, 2017b). In addition to schooling disruption, the distress encountered during the perilous journey of migration is often compounded by the challenges of adjusting to a very different life, adapting to a new school environment and rules, making new friends, catching up with all the content subjects, and often learning a new language (Sirin & Roger-Sirin 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2017b). Due to these stressors, refugee children cannot fully experience the joy of being a child and are compelled to grow up fast.

Urban refugee children are particularly at more disadvantage of accessing educational opportunities than those accommodated in camps because there are often legal, policy, and social barriers limiting access to inclusive education. Whereas refugee education in camps is largely

supported by UN specialized agencies (e.g. UNHCR, UNICEF) and educational INGOs, urban settings necessitate a close collaboration between the global actors, Ministry of Education and provincial and local level education authorities (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Because children (especially the young ones) tend to learn new languages faster than their parents, caregivers or older siblings, urban refugee children frequently become the spokespersons for their families and cultural liaisons. They carry additional strain of assisting their families to navigate complex paperwork and translate communications between adults at schools, hospitals and elsewhere (Mendenhall et al. 2017b).

Studies show that the stress and trauma associated with forced displacement, armed conflicts, and settlement into an unfamiliar environment can negatively affect children's functioning and brain, psychosocial and emotional development, which may cause learning and concentration difficulties (American Psychological Association (APA), 2010; Betancourt & Khan, 2008). However, the provision of mental health and psychosocial services is largely absent for urban refugees in host country contexts (Sirin & Roger-Sirin, 2015). On a positive note, studies also show that most conflict-affected children exhibit remarkable resilience and can overcome the adversity of war and hardship of adjustments with proper care and support from families, communities and school staff (Wessells, 2016; Betancourt & Khan, 2008). If given access to mainstream schooling, structured classroom settings facilitated by teachers who are trained on child protection, psychosocial support and pedagogy can help refugee students to restore a normal life, interact with peers, engage in activities and games, and begin to learn again. Therefore, it is important for the school staff to understand and be informed about the experiences and unique needs of refugee students.

Integration Challenges Faced by Educators

Despite the growing trend of integrating all learners into national education systems, public schools face multifaceted challenges to accommodate the needs of their new student populations. Among the most prevalent challenges are insufficient resources, limited provision of professional development training programs, and lack of systemized academic and psychosocial support systems (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Mendenhall et al., 2017a, 2017b; Sirin & Roger-Sirin, 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2015). When these are combined with negative school climate, caused by discrimination and bullying, and hardship in acquiring the language of instruction skills to access the curriculum without sufficient support, the result becomes low school attendance and high dropouts, thus reducing the de jure access to education.

Teachers in inclusive classrooms often experience burden and burnout due to limited and insufficient teaching and learning materials; lack of teacher training to meet the diverse needs of students; lack of knowledge regarding the needs of refugee learners and educational backgrounds; time restrictions to carry out the national curriculum; and language and communication barriers (Dryden-Peterson, 2011, 2016; UNHCR, 2012, 2016; Walker et. al., 2004; Mendenhall et al, 2015, 2017a; Seker & Sirkeci, 2015; Er & Bayindir, 2015). In the context of Turkey, previous studies found similar challenges of inclusion, namely communication and language barriers, behavioral disorders such as aggressive behavior, socio-cultural differences, unadaptable curriculum, lack of knowledge among teachers regarding the needs of refugee learners, and limited capacities of teachers for inclusive classroom and time management (Er & Bayindir, 2015; Seker & Sirkeci, 2015; Dogutas, 2016; Erdem, 2017; Tosten et al., 2017). All of these studies highlight that these challenges are not unique to a particular country context but are worldwide pressing barriers to quality inclusive education.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges and to Foster Integration

Removing these pressing barriers are not easy undertakings and indeed require substantial funding and cooperation. In addition, there are certain factors pertinent to quality education that are beyond teachers' control, including the content and relevance of curriculum, the provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment, and the size of classrooms (INEE, 2010). However, caring, motivated and appropriately trained teachers can still find ways to overcome some of these environmental and cultural obstacles. For example, in their study, Mendenhall et al. (2015) found that trained refugee teachers were able to make the existing Kenyan curriculum "relevant and meaningful to their refugee students" (121). According to Global Education Cluster, high-quality classroom teaching in refugee situations would include: the use of a variety of teaching and learning methods (question and answer, discussions, group work, demonstration, competition, and creative games); the use of teaching materials and aids if available; non-violent disciplinary practices; and inclusive instruction that gives all children a chance to participate (2010).

Similarly, the International Rescue Committee, one of the largest INGOs working with and for refugees in the U.S. and overseas, outlines the ways in which teachers can create a positive and inclusive classroom climate with limited resources and overarching challenges: 1) showing respect and empathy for all children and asking them to do the same; 2) teaching tolerance by not condemning students for their mistakes or laughing at them; 3) giving children a sense of self-worth through encouragement and recognition; 4) creating positive learning through gender balanced seating arrangements; 5) encouraging peer support and group work in learning through activities; 6) recognizing students' artistic work by hanging them on the walls; 7) making the classrooms physically and emotionally safe and secure places that are bullying and

violence free (International Rescue Committee, 2004, p. 10). These teacher practices are indeed in line with the human rights-based approach to education, explained below, and would foster the integration process.

To overcome the language barrier, teachers in inclusive classrooms often utilize the language skills of their bilingual students. Tosten et al. (2017) and Saritas et al. (2016) found that some Turkish public teachers often ask the assistance of refugee students to translate Turkish words for their peers. This practice might address the immediate challenge, but the overuse of refugee students as interpreters at schools diminishes their ability to learn. Hurley et al. (2011) presents alternative methods of communication such as sign language, pictures, facial expressions and affection. They highlighted that with the use of these methods, American teachers who have diverse refugee students in their classrooms reported some success in making their students feel less frustrated and more welcomed.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Integration is the overarching conceptual framework, but this study also draws from the social ecological model theory and human rights-based approach to education given their applicability to the context of education in emergencies and their emphasis on key factors that influence refugee children's integration. The social ecological model theory developed in the 1970s by Bronfenbrenner, a pioneer in the field of developmental psychology, stresses that children do not develop in isolation but rather their relations and interactions with family members, school staff, community and larger society play significant roles in the process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This model outlines multilevel systems playing in child's development and well-being, namely ontogenic level (individual agency; e.g. child's own knowledge, attitudes

and beliefs), microsystem (immediate environment; family, teachers, and peers), mesosystem (community and neighborhood factors), exosystem (social institutions and organizations), and macrosystem (larger environment; freedoms permitted by government policies, societal and cultural beliefs) (APA, 2010). It emphasizes that relational and environmental factors influence all aspects of children's development and inherently calls for reciprocal caring and collective responsibility sharing for children to reach their full potential. Betancourt and Khan explain that “for children, war represents a fundamental alteration of the social ecology and infrastructure” (2008, p. 318). This is particularly the case for refugee children, whose social ecology system changes as a result of forced migration—new friends, neighbors, teachers, policies, and societal and cultural norms.

Similarly, the rights-based framework to education stresses that “the actions, attitudes and behaviours of all members of communities affect the realization or denial of rights in education,” highlighting the need for active support from and engagement of every stakeholder (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007, p. 87). Moreover, it recognizes that the right to education encompasses access to educational facilities, access to quality education, and respect for rights within education (Ibid.). It promotes the development of positive school climates and ethos that demonstrate respect for and value the views, cultures, and agencies of all individual students and their parents (Ibid.). All of these individuals and factors influence the degree to which refugee students integrate into their schools and communities.

Chapter IV: Research Methods and Methodology

Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach because the researcher tries “to understand the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30). Moreover, the study employed a multisite case study design to investigate whether the findings vary across sites and/or within different participant subgroups of educators. Case study design is selected because “it can help [the researcher] to recognize the diversity among the individuals, or within the settings, [and] the actual contexts within which these are situated, rather than seeing these as simply manifestations of abstract, context-free categories” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 79).

Access to Sites

During my desk research, I realized that to conduct field research in Turkish state schools in one designated province, researchers must first gain local permission from the respective Provincial Directorate of National Education (PDNE) as stipulated by circular 2012/13 (MoNE, 2012). To gain local permission from the Bursa PDNE, I was obliged to submit an electronic application accompanied by a detailed research proposal in both Turkish and English to a local decision-making commission within the Department of Research and Development (known as Ar-Ge in the Turkish context). The commission responded to the application the next day, attaching an official letter of approval signed by the Bursa Provincial Director of National Education. Important to note is that although the approval letter granted local permission to carry out the proposed research project in designated sites, it restricted the flexibility and freedom of the researcher to some extent in data collection (e.g. teacher recruitment and classroom observations) because it mandated the school administrators to monitor and oversee all the research activities carried out in school settings. After all, the administrators were more

supportive and cooperative than they were a barrier to the research project. Nonetheless, their involvement in teacher recruitment for the interviews may have caused some discomfort among the participant teachers.

Sampling Criteria and Recruitment Techniques

Patton (2015) explains that “the logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding of specific cases: *information-rich cases*. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96, emphasis in original). For that reason, the sampling strategy for site selection was criterion sampling—one of the several types of purposive sampling. The predetermined criteria for site selection in this study were the following: public schools that are at the primary level, accommodate at least 100 Syrian students, and have had Syrian students since 2014. For the site selection, I conducted Internet searches and visited the MoNE website and local newspapers. After the identification process, school administrators were contacted via telephone to confirm that they meet the criteria, to outline the research topic and objectives and to gauge their interests in participating in the study and in allowing access to conduct the fieldwork project at their sites. All administrators agreed to participate on the condition that I presented a local permission letter from the PDNE.

Before the fieldwork began, I informally visited the sites and acquainted myself with the people and settings. With the guidance of administrators, interview and observation schedules were determined after negotiations with participants. Classroom teachers were selected using criterion purposeful sampling, in which the criterion was the teacher having at least one Syrian student in his/her classroom. In regards to observations, the administrators also helped select

classrooms to be observed with the assistance of classroom teachers. After being informed that most teachers have on average four Syrian students in their classrooms, the criterion was determined as: at least one Syrian student being present in the classroom on a scheduled day.

Although the initial sampling only included classroom teachers and administrators, after the pilot interview with one classroom teacher, I decided to include school counselors and contracted teachers in the sample as well because the teacher frequently made references to these groups of educators. Thus, the latter groups were recruited through an opportunistic sampling strategy. Opportunistic sampling, also known as emergent sampling, “takes advantage of whatever unfolds as it unfolds’ by utilising ‘the option of adding to a sample to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities after fieldwork has begun’” (Patton, 2002 cited in Suri, 2011, p. 71).

Data Collection Methods

The fieldwork was conducted between May 17 and June 7, 2017 in three primary public schools located in the Yildirim district of the Bursa province. The primary data consisted of field notes; memos; semi-structured interviews with deputy principals (n=3), classroom teachers (n=11) and contracted teachers (n=4) and school counselors (n=2); and structured classroom observations (n=11) (see Table 2 below). Each participant was given a copy of the written consent form in Turkish (see Appendix 2 and 3) and assured that the responses would be kept in confidentiality and names would remain anonymous. The sample consisted of 12 female and 8 male participants, whose professional experience in the education field ranged from 1-35 years. Interviews were conducted on-site at times and locations agreed by both the researcher and participants. All but two interviews were audio-taped. The semi-structured interviews were guided by interview protocols (see Appendix 4 and 5), each lasting an hour on average. As

Maxwell (2013) stated, “Although interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone’s perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you could not obtain by relying exclusively on interview data” (p. 103). Thus, in addition to interviews, non-participant classroom observations were used as a method of data collection. Observations were collected through taking in-class notes and using a post-observation assessment checklist (see Appendix 6 for the focus of observations).

Table 2 : Primary Data Collected from the Field

| School | Interviews | | | | Classroom observation |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Classroom Teacher | School Counselor | Contracted Teacher | Deputy Principal | |
| School 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| School 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| School 3 | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 11 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 11 |

Source: Author’s fieldwork, May-June, 2017

Data Analysis

The study adopted a thematic approach to data coding and analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Each interview was transcribed verbatim, and all transcriptions were coded and analyzed through “constant comparison” and “repetition” methods to identify cross-cutting themes within and across schools (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Classroom observations were coded in a similar fashion. After multiple rounds of revisiting the data, a number of cross-cutting issues emerged that were common within all groups and across sites. To protect confidentiality, classroom teacher participants are coded with letter T; deputy principals with DP; school counselors with SC, and contracted teachers with C. Sites are also coded with School 1, School 2, and School 3.

Internal Validity/ Trustworthiness

In this study, I employed multiple methods and triangulation techniques to cross-check the validity and accuracy of data sources and to complement the strengths and limitations of each other (Maxwell, 2013). More specifically, multiple data collection methods included interviews, observations, memos, documents and theories. Multiple data sources were gathered from different perspectives of educators as identified in table 2 above. The other strategy used was member checks (also known as respondent validation) to check the trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After the completion of transcriptions, five respondents were followed up to ensure the correctness of the interpretation.

Challenges and Limitations

One obvious limitation of the current study is that most teacher participants and lessons observed were identified and selected by the administrators. The other limitation is the exclusion of refugee students as participants, given the resource and time constraints. Since the target population for observations was Syrian students, other refugee children such as Iraqi and Afghani were excluded. The level of analysis of the study was restricted to the primary school level. Short opportunistic conversations were used with school counselors to explore their experiences, yet there was not an opportunity to interview the school counselor in school 3 due to time limitations.

Researcher Reflexivity/ Positionality

Since “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16), it is important to identify the assumptions made prior to the fieldwork and the researcher’s background. The assumptions were the following: the common

nationality between the researcher and the researched could connect us, and this connection would make it easier to build rapport and gain valuable, insightful information. The fact that I spoke the same language as the participants, was originally from Bursa, Turkey, and had a solid grasp of the locality, national context and culture, all indeed helped me having access to the research sites, building friendly relationships with the participants, and understand the language used, including the colloquial language. Having a shared cultural background was advantageous to the study because the participants viewed me as an insider, despite living in the U.S. for the past nine years. The power dynamic between the researcher and the participants was balanced by the following strategies: affirming that one of the intentions of the research is to voice their lived experiences and needs; describing the research topic and questions; guaranteeing the protection of their identities; and allowing the participants to choose the location sites and time for the interviews. Given the increased prevalence of xenophobia and negative attitude amongst the Turkish people toward Syrians due to media's negative portrayal of refugees, it was assumed that most teachers would be against the integration policy and that they would not spend additional efforts to foster the integration of Syrians into the Turkish society.

As a graduate student with an academic background in forced displacement and children's rights, I understand and am fully aware of the roles and obligations of all stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, and the government) pertinent to children's human right to education. But having no background in teaching, I lack an understanding of what it is like to be a teacher of refugee students and how challenging an inclusive education might be. Therefore, I approached to the overall study, including data collection and analysis, through the lens of human rights, not through the lens of an educator.

Chapter V: Findings

Overview

This section presents three broad themes and sub-themes that fall under these categories, namely the challenges that the school staff encountered in integrating refugee students into their classroom and schools, the strategies they employed in order to remove the barriers and to foster the integration process, and finally the support they need from the government to better integrate refugee students into their schools and communities in general.

Theme 1: Challenges Faced by the School Staff in Integration

The overwhelming majority of participants described their overall experience with having refugee students in their schools as positive, and believed that the inclusive education policy would benefit everyone in the long-run. Yet they were challenged by numerous pressing factors that hindered their ability to foster the process of integration and that demanded additional efforts by the school staff to overcome them. Although each group of participants had unique challenges and needs pertinent to their duties, the root causes of these challenges were common and noticeable in the schools visited. The following subsections will identify these cross-cutting themes found in the data sources.

Language and Communication Barriers

Across all groups of participants, the language barrier was the most frequently mentioned challenge to the integration process. School counselors noted that because of the language barrier, they were unable to provide meaningful counseling services for Syrian students. Most classroom teachers (7 out of 11) expressed that lack of Turkish language skills among their refugee students was the key impediment to their academic success, smooth integration into their

classroom and building relationships with Turkish pupils and teachers. They stressed that the language barrier was a major challenge when the Syrian students were regularly absent, enrolled in the middle of the semester or in the middle grades (such as in 2nd or 3rd grade), that is, after they already covered the alphabet, reading and writing, given that the students were not provided with Turkish language support prior to enrollment. In these cases, teachers identified their difficulty of classroom time management to meet the educational needs of all learners. This challenge encountered by many teachers was also noted by all three deputy principals who acknowledged that teachers felt overwhelmed, were anxious to carry out the curricula and displayed disincentive to go back to the basics for their newcomers. As an example, DP2 noted:

The [Syrian] child comes to school in second or third grade often sits behind the desk, bored [due to language barrier]. Teachers come to me saying am I going to teach him Turkish when we are covering Mathematics and science? [...] They ask what can I do for that student; should I leave 29 students alone and care for 1 student instead?

All teachers including the deputy principals agreed that their inability to communicate with Syrian parents was a greater challenge to their efforts, provided that lack of sustainable contact information, lack of a common language, or parents' low involvement in schools. Seven classroom teachers expressed their distress with lack of Turkish skills among Syrian parents, who were unable to academically support their children as the Turkish parents. Some teachers also noted that even explaining to parents the need to obtain school supplies (stationery) was a problem. All deputy principals highlighted their difficulty in reaching Syrian parents to inquire about the whereabouts of their children or to gain parental permission in order for the students to participate in school trips. This challenge was partly because of the language barrier between the school staff and parents but due mostly to lack of sustainable contact information of the parents (e.g. home address and telephone number). Further, the schools were reluctant to translate the school supplies list or letters of notification into Arabic because the participants strongly

believed that the smooth integration process of Syrian students is deeply linked to the socio-cultural integration process of Syrian parents and that the parents' Turkish language capacities affect the teachers' integration efforts. T10 stated:

If the end goal is to integrate them [Syrian refugees], we have to begin with parents because everything starts with the family. We continue to teach Turkish to our [Syrian] students, but when they do not speak a word of Turkish at home, they forget everything. So, the integration process doubles. On the contrary, if we could reach parents, the process would be facilitated.

This shared belief suggests that Syrian parents need the same or perhaps more language support than the children receive. Overall, the language and communication problem was the number one impeding factor for Syrian students to smoothly integrate into their schools.

Socio-Economic Barriers

Economic difficulty of Syrian parents, coupled with the limited resources of schools, was the second most identified challenge to the school staff's integration efforts. The overwhelming majority of the participants mentioned that the Syrian parents' inability to afford school-related costs (e.g. school uniform, stationery, school trips) and other fees (e.g. new curtains for the school) has caused an increased financial burden on the school community, which consequently resulted in some teachers and Turkish parents developing negative attitudes toward Syrian parents. Moreover, some teachers recalled that the appearance of Syrian students in the past (e.g. not wearing the school uniform) due to economic difficulties had unintentionally caused Syrian students to appear as isolated and Turkish students to distance themselves.

Two deputy principals and seven classroom teachers highlighted that the negative attitudes of Turkish parents toward the integration of Syrian refugees into schools was prevalent in the early years due to the perception of the state and school practices of positive discrimination against Syrians (e.g. refugees not paying the school-related fees), and that the

parents' attitudes were reflected in the behavior of Turkish students. The teachers stated that during the first two years many Turkish parents demanded that their children not sit together with Syrian students. They added that when they explained to parents the living conditions of Syrian families and when the Turkish parents observed the Syrian students' physical appearance (in poor conditions), they began to sympathize and their attitude drastically changed. In the absence of financial support from the government to schools and due to economic hardship that refugee families face, the school staff encountered significant challenges not only to address the materialistic needs of Syrian students but also to foster social cohesion between the locals and refugees.

Lack of Meaningful and Sufficient Support from the Government

The overwhelming majority of the participants (18 out of 20) reported that they have not received sufficient, timely and/or relevant support from the government in order for them to smoothly and effectively carry out their duties. Only two participants dissented from the majority opinion, considering that the government provided textbooks for all Syrian students free of charge and deployed contracted teachers in their schools for language support. In addition to financial assistance, guidance and professional development support and provision of teaching and learning materials were the most frequently identified areas, where the school staff lacked the government support but needed the most. DP1 indignantly expressed the experiences of the school staff in his school:

Teachers had as much information as we administrators had [...] Teachers experienced serious unjust sufferings [...] The government should have done all the things it is doing this year in the very first year [...] First of all, it was supposed to send interpreters to every school. Not every school has an Arabic speaking teacher. It did not do that. It did not provide guidance to teachers on how to approach to [Syrian] students. It was supposed to inform [and train] school counselors. None of these steps were taken.

Not until early 2017 have the public school staff received any type of training or guidance, according to this study's participants. Further, most participants described their perceptions regarding the quality and content of the training as: "unbeneficial", "superficial", "not tailored for refugee students", "an overdue training", and of "poor quality." There was a noticeable climate of resentment among all groups regarding government inaction and delay in delivery of services for the schools, and a shared belief that neither the Syrian students nor the school staff were prepared for inclusive education because the students were not linguistically supported to access the curriculum content prior to enrollment, and the school staff were not prepared to accommodate the diverse needs of their new student populations.

The greatest challenges that all contracted teachers faced were lack of teaching experience, lack of curriculum provision, and lack of developmentally appropriate textbooks. During the pre-service trainings, the contracted teachers were told to create their own lesson plans with the assistance of school administrators. According to interviews, this resulted in overwhelmed teachers who had varying and non-standardized lesson plans. Further, the teachers underlined that although the Yunus Emre Institute provided schools with Turkish literacy sets, the textbooks were not designed for students with no or minimal Turkish language skills. The insufficiency of textbooks was also highlighted by two deputy principals.

Lack of training and information particularly on harmful practices and how to deal with trauma-affected children caused distress among many teachers who stated that they were uncertain whether it was appropriate to discuss war-related topics in their classrooms. One classroom teacher, T2, in particular, recalled feeling a deep sorrow because of his inability to foresee the consequences of taking along a Syrian student to watch a war-themed event. He explained remorsefully:

Last year I took my students [including one Syrian student] to see an event outside of school by the municipality building, where the actors were portraying the Turkish War of Independence. The actors were dressed in soldier uniforms with rifles in their hand. Then there was the shooting sound effect. As my Syrian student heard the sound, he began to shake and cry sobbingly. We failed to anticipate the psychological distress that this may cause. That day I clearly understood how little we knew about their mental conditions.

In sum, lack of timely professional capacity building trainings for the school staff affected and risked both the well-being of the teachers and refugee students, who have already experienced traumatic events. This has caused anxiety among teachers and unintentional psychological pain on children. Similarly, because the administrators also lacked information and guidance from the government, they were not competently able to provide guidance to teachers.

Behavioral Challenges/Issues among Syrian Students

Habitual truancy (frequent unexcused absenteeism), fighting, and resistance to wearing school uniforms were the most common behavioral challenges among Syrian students that, according to the participants, played a hindering role in integration. Most participants, including all three deputy principals, marked absenteeism as one of the major barriers to the Syrian students' learning and adaptation to schools, and a reason for grade repetition among Syrian students. Deputy principals noted that some Syrian students register but never come to school while the rest miss on average 20 days of schooling in an academic year. However, they added that the attendance rates of Syrian students have increased, albeit slightly, in comparison to previous years.

The second frequently cited issue was the physically aggressive behaviors among Syrian students, particularly male and older students, toward their Turkish counterparts as well as other Syrian students. As a consequence, Turkish students were hesitant and reluctant to befriend Syrian peers as they perceived them as belligerent. SC2 noted her concerns regarding some Syrian students with behavioral disorders in her school (e.g. aggressive and extremely violent

behaviors), but because there was not any referral system in place, coupled with the language barrier, she was unable to provide psychological counseling to the students or refer them to a specialist. Nine classroom teachers and two deputy principals expressed that Syrian students were much more aggressive in the past than they currently are, and thought that the improvement in their behaviors was closely related to the increased sense of belonging and confidence in the Turkish language.

Resistance to wear the school uniform among Syrian students was an interesting finding. All deputy principals noted that every Syrian student was eventually provided with school uniforms, but there is an active resistance to wear it. DP2 stressed that: “our teachers and some benefactors purchased the [Syrian students’] school uniforms, even though they are not wearing it. They all have it but do not want to wear it... We ask parents the reason [for their children’s attitude], they say I am forcing him but he does not want to wear it.” The data gathered from 11 classroom observations were consistent with the interview data that out of 38 Syrian students observed during lessons, only five was wearing a uniform, whereas the majority of Syrian students were in their causal clothing. Given the study excluded Syrian students from the sample, the underlying reasons for their reluctance are unknown.

Theme 2: Practices and Strategies for Integration

Despite the limited support from the government and lack of knowledge in refugee education, teachers and administrators found innovative ways to tackle language and economic challenges, to improve refugee students’ learning and adaptation to the school culture, and to increase their own knowledge and awareness. After noting the school-level support system, the

following sections will focus primarily on teachers' classroom practices, and the role the deputy principals played in leading the teachers and in overcoming the economic challenges.

A. Strategies to Overcome the Language and Behavioral Problems

School-level Language Support

First intervention was at the school level. After observing the struggle of Syrian students with the Turkish language, all three schools prioritized the language issue and created language support programs that were instructed by the school teachers—schools 2 and 3 established the course in 2015, school 1 in 2016. These courses remained open until the implementation of the PICTES project in December 2016, when the contracted teachers assumed the task. School 2 had also offered a language course for Turkish and Syrian mothers in the 2015-2016 academic year, unlike the rest.

Rights-Based Approach: Creating Positive and Inclusive Classroom Climate

Most teachers cited the show of “love”, “empathy”, “respect to diversity”, and “equal treatment” as their essential non-formal ways to help refugee students feel at ease, to reduce stereotyping and to build community in the classroom. Particularly teachers with migration backgrounds (3) and three contracted teachers stated building a sense of belonging was a critical first step for their refugee students. They observed that when refugee students began to feel accepted and respected by the teachers and peers, their language learning, overall literacy skills, relationships with peers and emotional well-being improved considerably. This reiterates the crucial role of teachers in creating a positive climate. To cite an example, in an English lesson observed at school 2, a male Syrian student mispronounced a word of an animal. Some Turkish students reacted with a laughter, even though the teacher quickly intervened. On the contrary, in

the classroom of T8, all five Syrian students were behaving well, listening to the teacher attentively, and responding to questions when the teacher called on them. One male Syrian student raised his hand to answer a question but he gave the wrong answer, with no one ridiculing him. When T8 was asked about her pedagogical strategies to integrate her Syrian students into her classroom, she responded as:

In the past, my Turkish students used to call them as “Syrians” or “they” just like their parents. Whenever I heard those divisive labels, I immediately intervened and reminded to my class that we are a whole; we are one unit as a class regardless of our nationalities. Then I told them if they needed to segregate someone, they should begin with me because I was not born in Turkey either. Since that talk, they began to address them by their names. Developing a sense of empathy is the key and that [teaching empathy] is our duty as teachers.

Her intervention to prevent future stereotypes or labeling was reflected in her welcoming and positive classroom climate.

Another frequently mentioned strategy was the encouragement of language and culture exchange in learning. Six classroom teachers noted using this technique in or outside the classroom, with the purpose of making their Syrian students feel welcome about their cultural differences and build positive teacher-student and peer relationships. For example, T7 expressed his rationale for using this method:

[While I was giving him one-on-one additional language support after school hours], I asked Ahmed to teach me some Arabic words. He liked it. He would tell me the words in Arabic and in turn I would tell him their equivalence in Turkish. Of course, my purpose was not to learn Arabic but to attract his attention and have him get close to me. This helped Ahmed to gain confidence and to learn how to read and write quickly.⁶

These teachers also asked their Syrian students to introduce the class their own games, songs, cultural clothing, and traditional foods, with the intention of highlighting the richness of diversity

⁶ Children’s names are replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity.

and the fact that they are all children despite their differences. T4 explained how this method improved peer relations:

When I was teaching a music lesson, I asked my Syrian students if they would like to share with us their folk music or traditional songs. I wanted them to introduce their culture and to understand that we are not trying to assimilate them. It was beautiful and since then, the Turkish students' attitudes toward them has changed [in a very positive way].

Most contracted teachers stressed the power of sense of belonging and love as a method of breaking the emotional barriers between themselves and Syrian students. That is, the teachers observed that the Syrian students needed emotional healing and socio-emotional adjustment to the teacher first in order for them to begin to learn. In the observed "harmonization class," which is designated only for Syrian students with low Turkish skills under the PICTEC project, the contracted teacher engaged and constantly motivated all of her students and had the class applaud when a student gave the right answer. She used competitive game learning when teaching the body parts, and all students were cheerful. The walls were covered with the drawings of her Syrian students. Though the children were so cheerful during the lesson, CT3 stressed that the positive atmosphere I witnessed that day was not the case when she first started her job. She described her experience and pedagogical strategies:

I love my current job because I feel beneficial. What I like most about children is that their eyes shine with joy and that's why I chose this profession. But when I first started working with them [Syrian students], I looked into their eyes; they were lifeless, dull. I played a song, they were not entertained. I sang a song, they did not laugh, not even smiled. Now that they learned how to read and write and developed a sense of belonging, all their energy has changed [...] These children were looking for emotional support, and that's what I provided. I removed these emotional barriers through the show of love and support [...] Now they are dancing when I play a song [and] most of them can read and write.

Even though the teacher lacked teaching experience, she simply followed her conscience and by making her students feel at ease through the show of love and the use of games in learning, she

helped them to develop a sense of belonging, which translated into accelerated learning rates and improved psychosocial well-being. These teaching and pedagogical strategies resonated among many teachers, who strongly believed that the improvement of their Syrian students' adaptation to the classroom and school was closely linked to the increased sense of belonging and the feeling of being accepted by the school community.

Balanced Grade Placement and Mixed Seating Arrangements

All deputy principals highlighted that they aimed to distribute Syrian students evenly in all classrooms, and took gender and age into account in their placement strategies, to foster the harmonization process. Each classroom, they noted, particularly the first three grades, has on average 4 Syrian students. The observation data confirmed that the ratio of Syrian-Turkish students was on average 4:26. In the lessons observed, Syrian and Turkish students seemed to have positive and supportive relationships, and that the Syrian students were comfortable being in the classrooms with Turkish students and teachers, and vice versa.

Many teachers stated that they tried multiple strategies in their classroom management practices as an attempt to discover what works best to foster the harmonization process. All classroom teachers noted that they purposefully seated Syrian students alongside Turkish peers, considered the gender balance, and grouped Syrian and Turkish students in activities, games and projects. It was also observed in the lessons that all Syrian students were sitting together with or next to Turkish students, most of them being dispersed across the classrooms. Yet four teachers recalled having difficulty in seating their older female Syrian students with male students or grouping them in activities with males, noting the cultural differences between the two groups. Except for a few participants highlighting the issue of cultural clashes, most teachers observed that peer learning through the use of mixed seating arrangement and group participation in socio-

cultural activities were the best strategies to overcome the language barrier, to make refugee students feel equal, and to build positive relationships between pupils.

Remedial Programs and Communication Methods

Five classroom teachers across the sites noted implementing in-class remedial programs for their Syrian students (who enrolled in the second semester or in middle grades such as in the 2nd or 3rd grade), prior to the arrival of contracted teachers, while other students were copying from the board, doing exercises or an activity such as drawing. Six classroom teachers noted that they requested their older Syrian students to translate to their counterparts, and five teachers stated using hand gestures as a communication method in the past.

To engage in communication with the parents, most teachers stated being unable to communicate with Syrian parents due to lack of contact information or lack of parental involvement in school, whereas eight teachers (including three contracted teachers) mentioned the use of technology (WhatsApp) to inform the parents about their children's academic success, the dates of teacher-parent meeting, or about the school materials their children need to obtain. Importantly, these teachers observed that as they made efforts to reach and engage the parents in school news and activities, Syrian parents become more involved in their children's schoolwork and began to visit the school more. They also noted that those students whose parents are more engaged in schools academically do better. This may indicate that if the school staff takes a step to engage the parents, Syrian parents' comfort level with the school system may be increased, which would also facilitate the parents' integration process into the Turkish society. This also means that if parents are more engaged in schools, students' integration process would be fostered accordingly, not to mention their parents.

Disciplinary Methods

Some teachers highlighted that there was a tendency among Turkish students in the past to scapegoat their Syrian counterparts for criminal behaviors, namely stealing, committed in the classroom, because the Syrian students had limited language capacity to defend themselves. In the face of such accusations, the role the teachers play would deeply affect the school climate, peer relations, and the well-being of refugee students. Some teachers stated reporting the incident to the principal, others noted that they resolved the problem inside the classroom by talking to students. However, one classroom teacher and a deputy principal admitted threatening the Syrian students to call the police. They reasoned that Syrian students are afraid of the police and such a threat would deter them from committing school disciplinary acts. This practice is a manifestation of lack of training on harmful practices. Overall, there was not any systematic way to help Syrian students with behavioral issues in any of the schools.

B. Strategies to Overcome Economic Barriers

School Leadership and Community Engagement

The literature highlights the importance of strong leadership in creating a positive school climate and ethos for the school community, and how school leaders influence the performance and motivation of teachers. Consistent with the literature, the majority of classroom teachers and three contracted teachers working in school 1 and 2 highlighted that they were motivated and supported by the administrators, who were profoundly committed to integrate Syrian students into their schools and communities. A major role that the two administrators (DP1 and DP2) played in the integration process was organizing school-level events, for which deputy principals demanded teachers to invite all Syrian parents, include the Syrian students in all activities, but more importantly, offer participation in the events free of charge. DP3 noted they have not

organized any socio-cultural activities at the school-level with the purpose of facilitating the harmonization process. Instead, such activities were employed by classroom teachers in their classrooms. It was observed that teachers in schools 1 and 2 made additional efforts to create conditions that are conducive to learning and participation of everyone, which is in no small part because of strong leadership. As oppose to other schools, school 2 has a policy that grants 10% financial quota for each teacher to cover the school-related costs of the most vulnerable students, regardless of the backgrounds of students.

As noted earlier, the economic burden of Syrian parents added more responsibility on the already low-resourced schools, which also lacked financial support from the government. However, deputy principals managed to find ways to maneuver such resource constraints by engaging the whole school and local community, thus adapting a whole school approach to inclusive education. DP1 noted:

Last year we organized a festival at the school for the international children's day, comprised of both Turkish and Syrian students... Teachers, myself, and my family covered all the costs of students. The costumes we had at hand were too big, so I requested one of the Turkish parents to tighten them, and she did it for free... This year too a local tailor sewed and adjusted their costumes for free. These activities were beautiful... All Syrian parents were in tears because of happiness.

The school staff in all three schools ranked participation in socio-cultural activities as one of the most important levers for the integration process. Yet, they noted that there was a shared belief among Syrian parents that the schools were supposed to cover all the costs for their children. Thus, the schools adopted immediate and culturally responsive strategies to include the Syrian students in these activities. T8 highlighted:

You probably have noticed Sena wears a headscarf [which is prohibited at the primary school level by law]. I never asked her to take it off [...] She also wants to pray. I allow her to leave the class and pray because I know that religion is deeply rooted in their culture [...] In fact, the administrator and I asked a local tailor to lengthen her tutu skirt

for the children's festival at the school [that girls were going to wear], so that she could participate in that too.

The role of local government in providing services free of charge was highlighted by a teacher in school 2. For example, T2 noted with gratitude:

We have a field trip tomorrow. We are not collecting any money from the students. The metropolitan municipality will financially support us. A few days back, we were having an in class discussion on what cultural things were unique to Bursa, and mentioned the Iskender [kebab]. Only a few tried it before. We will be guests at the municipality-owned restaurant that makes Iskender [kebab]. My Syrian student will also join us. When they [Syrian students] spend time together with [Turkish] friends outside the school, they harmonize much more.

With individual teacher efforts and care, strong leadership, and meaningful community engagement, most of the economic challenges were reduced and the harmonization between the students was fostered.

C. Strategies to Overcome Lack of Knowledge

Peer Support Among Educators

In the absence of knowledge and experience with the integration of refugee students into education systems, educators stated that they benefited from peer support to undertake administrative tasks and to find activities and games for integration. Deputy principals noted that principals from different schools called each other to seek advice on how to register and integrate Syrian students into the school system. Similar peer support was highlighted in the interviews with classroom and contracted teacher participants. For example, two contracted teachers at school 1 mentioned that they benefited in great deal from a WhatsApp group comprised of over 200 contracted teachers working in the Bursa province. It was the provincial coordinator, who proposed to create a peer support platform. They particularly noted benefiting from the activities designed for Turkish language learners that other contacted teachers shared on the group page.

Five classroom teachers mentioned that they shared in-class socio-cultural ideas with other teachers in their school. Others conducted Internet searches, visited the MoNE's "e-okul" site, or did not do anything special in the name of harmonization because their Syrian students were already well-integrated. In addition to peer support, two teachers mentioned reading war and refugee-themed books to understand their refugee students' lived experiences. Overall, peer support among educators not only reduced the level of anxiety stemmed from lack of knowledge, but also generated a pool of innovative ideas to engage Syrian students in socio-cultural activities and to improve their language learning.

Theme 3: Future Needs of Educators

This section summarizes the needs of participants pertinent to their duties that demand government action and support. The most frequently identified cross-cutting needs of the school staff included: technical assistance (e.g. training programs), financial and material support (e.g. textbooks and stationery), and education programs for refugee parents. The distribution of the identified needs is as follows: professional development support and training (10); financial support either to schools or to Syrian parents to obtain school materials (7); bilingual interpreters (7); language support to parents (6); education for Syrian parents on their legal obligations in children's education (6); developmentally appropriate textbook for language learners (4); and moral support and recognition from the government (2).

Participants particularly emphasized their need for training on avoiding the use of harmful practices in education, how to deal with trauma-affected children, psychosocial support, and awareness raising to understand the experiences and needs of refugee children. The need for bilingual interpreters was stressed by most groups. Whereas the school counselors needed a

bilingual co-therapist to provide psychological counseling service for refugee students, classroom teachers and deputy principals emphasized their need for a bilingual interpreter to communicate with the parents and as a way to engage them more in schools. Participants also noted that parents need training on their legal obligations for their children's right to education as a measure to curtail or halt the frequent truancy among Syrian students. And finally, along with a contracted teacher, the deputy principal of school 1 stressed an inexpensive but highly valuable need of his school staff. That is, the recognition and acknowledgment of their efforts by the local education authorities.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

This qualitative multi-site case study was designed to reveal the kinds of challenges and needs of the school staff regarding the inclusion of Syrian students in their schools and the types of strategies they used to overcome these challenges in order to determine the preparedness of schools and roles they play in fostering the larger integration process. By examining the practices and policies of three Turkish primary public schools located in the Bursa province through interview and observation sources, the study found that while the government has spent tremendous efforts on expanding access, the readiness levels of refugee students and preparedness of the school staff to cater to the diverse needs of learners were not carefully taken into consideration. In the absence of sufficient government support, the school staff had to tackle multifaceted challenges simultaneously. The study found that language and communication barriers (with students and parents), socio-economic hardships of Syrian parents to afford school-related costs, lack of access to meaningful and sufficient training, and behavioral issues

(e.g. truancy, fighting, not wearing a uniform) contribute to challenges in terms of integration and socio-cultural inclusion of refugees in school communities. All four of the identified difficulties are impediments to the integration process, as participants across sites stressed in the course of this research.

The findings also uncovered that the school staff was determined to integrate the Syrian students into their schools, and found innovative and intuitive ways to alleviate most of these challenges. The language barrier with students was mitigated through teachers' individual care, rights-based approaches and pedagogical skills, school-level language programs, and having Syrian students participate in socio-cultural group activities. Yet, in meeting the psychological needs to overcome behavioral challenges of Syrian students, all three sites remained aloof, despite the fact that participants noted some of these strategies also contributed to the improvement of Syrian students' behavioral disorders, namely fighting. The schools lack the capacity to provide counseling services mostly due to the language barrier but also because of lack of training on post-traumatic stress disorders. The disciplinary method employed by some educators, i.e. the threat of calling the police, to correct a student behavior clearly indicates that there is an urgent need for teacher and administrator training on harmful practices in refugee education. In fact, the participants themselves highlighted their need for this type of special training as they experienced unintended consequences of their trauma insensitive practices due to lack of knowledge and awareness.

The economic barriers and needs were hurdled through meaningful community engagement, including teachers, Turkish parents, and the local community, who either individually covered the costs, made donations, or provided services for free of charge. However, lacking financial support from the government, coupled with the economic difficulties

of Syrian parents, has caused Turkish parents and some teachers to develop negative attitudes toward refugee families because the school community was expected to shoulder the additional financial burden. This barrier was largely resolved in three ways: by strong leadership that promoted empathy for refugees and engaged the local community as in school 1; by school policies that granted each teacher a 10% quota to cover the expenses of the vulnerable students and the practice of engaging the local government in school 2; or by individual teachers who paid for the expenses of their Syrian students as in school 3. The strategies used to increase knowledge included: peer support among educators, including peer support groups via WhatsApp, conducting Internet searches, reading war- and refugee-themed books, or doing nothing special for refugee students. As the data showed, most participants need further technical assistance from the government (such as guidance and meaningful professional development trainings and bilingual interpreters), financial and material support (e.g. level appropriate textbooks and stationery), and education programs for refugee parents (language support and training focused on legal obligations in education).

Lessons Learned: Implications of the Study

The Syrian students observed seemed well-integrated in their classrooms, in no small part because of the caring and supportive teachers. It is no surprise that language barrier, socio-economic difficulties, and lack of teacher training were found as challenges, given that these issues are frequently identified in the refugee education literature (Er & Bayindir, 2015; Seker & Sirkeci, 2015; Saritas et al., 2016; Dogutas, 2016; Mendenhall et al. 2017a; Erdem, 2017; Tosten et al. 2017). Similarly, the finding that fighting and aggressive behaviors among Syrian students are major challenges to peer and student-teacher relations is parallel to the findings of Tosten et

al. (2017) and Saritas et al. (2016) and their work in Turkish public schools in the southern border cities and in the Denizli province, respectively.

However, the prevalent resistance among Syrian students to obey the school's uniform requirement despite possessing the uniforms, and this behavior's perceived impact on integration was an unexpected finding, a finding that is not found in the respective literature. Participants noted that not wearing a uniform creates an appearance of isolation, as if Syrian students are not part of the school, and this difference in physical appearance affects the peer relations and the unity of the school culture. Although most Syrian students observed were highly engaged in class discussions and in good relations with teachers and peers, given the limitation of the study, the underlying reasons for this reluctance are unknown but could be due to the negative connotation of uniformity (ontogenic level), parental influence (micro system), or some other social or psychological matter. Further, habitual truancy among Syrian students was another contribution to the knowledge in terms of integration challenges.

Another unexpected but significant finding are the ongoing efforts and care of teachers to integrate the Syrian students into the classrooms and schools, and the voluntary establishment of language support systems at schools. Contrary to the literature (Valdes, 2001; Wringley, 2000; Walker et. al., 2004), which posits that the society's attitudes affect the practices and attitudes of the school staff, this finding indicates that the societal values and negative attitudes toward refugees had no or minimal impact on teacher practices as the school staff approached refugee children through the lens of an educator, viewing them simply as children. As the data show, empathizing with refugee students, showing encouragement, respecting cultural differences, and developing a sense of empathy among Turkish students were effective methods for building welcoming communities in classrooms. Further, positive classroom environments that appreciate

diversity, mixed seating arrangements and Syrian students' participation in socio-cultural group activities were found as facilitating factors for integration and essential levers for healthy intergroup relations (International Rescue Committee, 2004). Moreover, it was found that parents' low engagement levels in the school system, due to language barriers, low comfort levels, or lack of knowledge about the school culture, were increased when the school staff has taken a step to include and engage them in education. The identified school practices in this study, namely targeted support to students (e.g. implementing remedial programs, language support courses, and emotional support), parental engagement (through the use of technology), and community involvement are not only key elements of good practices in inclusive education but also facilitators of integration (Mendenhall et al., 2017b; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block et al., 2014). All of these were made possible because of teachers' efforts driven by conscience and compassion and/or strong leaders who were determined to welcome refugee student populations.

Implications for Future Studies

Unlike the issues around the challenges in public schools, teachers' classroom strategies, school practices and the role of administrators with regard to integration received much less attention in the Turkey context. In this study, I documented the prevalent method of peer learning through mixed seating arrangements, establishment of positive classroom climate that promotes appreciation of cultural diversity, and placement of Turkish and Syrian students in socio-cultural group activities as levers that many teachers employed to foster the socio-cultural integration. Future studies should systematically investigate the role of each of these strategies on integration, and explore what other teacher practices are employed in mainstream schools. A

survey instrument targeting a large sample of teachers may be employed for the suggested research.

Given the study found that the role of administrators, particularly in school 1 and 2, played a significant role in providing emotional support to teachers and finding solutions to tackle economic challenges through community engagement, future studies should investigate the practices and roles of administrators on teacher practices and integration, and what kinds of support systems are available in Turkish public schools and other host country contexts. Also, the fact that behavioral issues among Syrian students recurrently emerge in the Turkish literature, which was also found in this study, there is an urgent need to systematically study how the mental health needs of Syrian students are being met in public schools. Finally, due to the limitations of the study, future studies should 1) scrutinize the needs of school counselors; 2) include the voices of refugee students and parents to portray a more comprehensive picture by asking whether or not school practices are fostering their integration processes.

Recommendations for Policy-Makers

Improving the capacities of teachers through regular and supervised trainings is essential to address the needs and in order for teachers to fulfill their duty to refugee children's right to education (Mendenhall, et al., 2015). Thus, the MoNE must support the inclusion of refugee children in Turkish schools through teacher training, particularly on second-language acquisition strategies, pedagogical skills, psychosocial support, inclusive classroom management, social cohesion, and trauma sensitive education. This way, most of the socio-cultural challenges would be mitigated.

The interview data show that language and communication problem with parents is a major challenge to a successful integration of refugee students into schools and a barrier to

maintain students' school attendance. One way to solve this is providing language support for parents and education on their legal obligations in education. However, it is much harder for parents to learn a second language especially since they have lesser connection or lower comfort levels to interact with the locals. Children must not be deprived of education, be it caused by parental negligence or lack of communication mechanisms between schools and parents. Thus, the alternative solution in the meantime is the employment of bilingual family liaison officers or social workers at schools, who would support the communication between the school staff and refugee families. This way, not only the burden of Turkish teachers would be eased and more Syrian parents would be involved in education, but also the integration of families be facilitated. If available, the employment of bilingual co-therapists at schools should also be prioritized.

The data sources demonstrate that a positive classroom climate, mixed seating arrangements, group projects and activities, all improve the learning outcomes, peer relations, and well-being of refugee children. Based on these findings, I recommend these classroom strategies be implemented in public schools in order to minimize classroom management difficulties and to foster the socio-cultural integration process. Finally, I also recommend the development of a teacher's guidebook that would ideally include but not be limited to: socio-emotional learning games and activities, classroom management strategies in inclusive education, and certain student behaviors to watch out for.

Concluding Remarks

This study documented that compassion, love, and empathy can transcend barriers, including the language barrier, and are highly important to break the socio-emotional walls between teachers and refugee students. Also, providing emotional support for refugee children is

a crucial step to make students feel welcome and prepare them to begin to learn again. Given the growing trend of integrating refugees into public institutions, schools must be prepared to cater the diverse needs of refugee learners because it is the teachers and administrators who translate policies into practical action. This study provided evidence that even in the absence of sufficient government support, strong leaders and dedicated, caring teachers can create positive learning environments for all. Indeed, the study found numerous good practice examples highlighted in the literature, but teachers have limits to what they can do unless they receive ongoing and sufficient support from the government because quality inclusive education requires development of the capacities of teachers and other education professionals (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Mendenhall et al., 2015, 2017b). Learning an unfamiliar language and building relationships with peers are difficult endeavors that require competent facilitators. Otherwise, thousands of Syrian students would be at risk of repeating the grades and dropping out. Increasing access to schools must be supplemented with improving the quality of education. Given that TECs will be closed by the end of 2019, the prioritization of teacher training is critical to ensure positive learning climates and a healthy integration process. Therefore, in order for schools to contribute to the larger integration process, they must receive support from the government.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: A List of UN Human Rights Instruments that Guarantee the Right to Education for All

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (Art. 26);
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 (1951 Refugee Convention; Art. 22);
- UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965 (Art. 5, 7);
- International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (Art. 13, 14);
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (Art. 10);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Art. 19, 22, 28, 29, 32);
- Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990 (Art. 12, 30, 43, 45);
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (Art. 24).

Appendix 2: Letter of Consent Form (Turkish)



Columbia Üniversitesi (New York, NY)

BİLGİLENDİREN KABUL BELGESİ

Bursa Eyaletinde Suriyeli Mülteci Çocukların "Uyumlaştırılması" Konusunda
Öğretmen ve Yöneticilerin Tecrübe ve Algıları

Araştırmacı: Benil Mostafa, Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi, İnsan Hakları Araştırmaları Enstitüsü,
Columbia Üniversitesi

Araştırma Danışmanı: Lara Nettelfield, İnsan Hakları Yüksek Lisans Programları Direktörü,
Columbia Üniversitesi

AMAÇ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Bursa ilinde yaşayan okula kayıtlı Suriyeli öğrencilerin uyumlaştırılması / entegrasyonu konusunda Türk öğretmen ve idarecilerin algılarını bağlamsal olarak kavramak ve okullarda uyumlaştırma adına ne gibi yöntemler kullanıldığını açığa çıkarmaktır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları tez projesinde kullanılacaktır.

RİSKLER

Bu çalışmayla ilişkili riskler mümkün olan en aza indirgenmiştir. Bu röportaj sırasında herhangi bir soru karşısında ya da zamanda rahatsız olursanız görüşme durdurabilir.

FAYDALAR

Bu çalışmaya katılmanızla kişisel (doğrudan) kazanç elde edebilir veya edemeyebilirsiniz. Bununla birlikte, bu araştırmadan elde edilen bilgiler gelecekte başkalarına yardımcı olabilir. Bu çalışmaya katılmanın olası faydaları şunları içermektedir: 1) İhtiyaç ve zorluklarınızın farkındalığının artırılması; 2) İl ve ilçenizdeki durumun farkındalığının artırılması; 3) Yerel / eyalet yetkililerinden destek sağlanması; 4) Savunmasız grubun (örneğin mültecilerin) ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için gözden geçirilmiş politikaların sağlanması.

PROSEDÜRLER

Katılımınız yaklaşık bir saat sürecektir. Bu röportajda herhangi bir noktada bir soruyu cevaplamayı reddedebilirsiniz. Çalışmanın bulgularını yazarken doğruluk sağlamak için mülakatlar kayıta alınacaktır. Kayıtlar, veri toplama ve analizini takiben araştırmacının şifre korumalı kişisel bilgisayarında saklanacaktır. Kayıtları dinleyecek tek kişi araştırmacının kendisidir ancak tez ve araştırma danışmanları veri çevriyazımı notlarını görebilir. Gizliliği korumak için okul, öğrenciler ve siz (öğretmen / müdür) de dahil olmak üzere tüm isimler için takma adlar kullanılacaktır.

Araştırmacıya bu röportajı kaydettirme yetkisi veriyorum. Lütfen isim ve soy isminizin baş harflerini yazınız.

EVET _____ HAYIR _____

Bu röportaj sırasında durdurmak istediğiniz herhangi bir noktada lütfen araştırmacıya bilgi verin. Bu röportajın ardından kaydın imha edilmesini istediğinize karar verirsiniz, bunun yapılması için istekte bulunma hakkına sahipsiniz.

DİĞER BİLGİLER

Görüşme konusu olarak size verilen atf sizin takdirinize kalacaktır. Lütfen aşağıdaki boş bırakılan alana isim ve soy isminizin baş harflerini yazınız.

1. Araştırmacıya görüşmemden alıntı yapmasına izni veriyorum ama ismimi gizleme şartıyla. Bu, son araştırma ürünlerinin mülakat yapılan kişinin adını içermeyeceği anlamına gelir.

EVET _____ HAYIR _____

2. Araştırmacı beni bir öğretmen / okul idarecisi olarak tanımlayabilir.

EVET _____ HAYIR _____

3. Araştırmacı, bu röportajın içeriğini yalnızca arka plan amaçlarıyla kullanabilir.

EVET _____ HAYIR _____

KATILIM

Araştırmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllüdür. Bu çalışmayla ilgili ödemeler olmayacaktır. Bu araştırma projesinden sizi kişisel olarak tanımlayan herhangi bir bilgi, kanunların gerektirdiği durumlar haricinde, sizin rızanız olmadan serbest bırakılmayacak veya açığa vurulmayacaktır.

İLETİŞİM BİLGİLERİ

Herhangi bir zamanda araştırma veya katılımınızla ilgili sorularınız olursa, araştırmacı Benil Mostafa'ya sorularınızı yöneltebilirsiniz. E-posta bm2792@columbia.edu ile araştırmacıya ulaşabilirsiniz. Sorularınızı araştırma danışmanı Lara Nettelfield'e de yöneltebilirsiniz: ljn9@columbia.edu. Bir araştırma katılımcısı olarak haklarınızla veya sorumluluklarınızla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen Columbia Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırma Koruma Ofisi ile iletişime geçin: Telefon 212-851-7040; Askirb@columbia.edu adresine e-posta atın.

KATILIMCI BİLDİRİMİ

Araştırmanın yukarıda belirtilen amaç, prosedür, risk ve diğer bilgilerini okudum ve araştırmaya katılmamdaki rolümü anladım. Soru sorma şansım oldu. Daha sonra araştırma ya da haklarıma ilişkin sorularım olursa, yukarıda listelenen kişi ve kurumlara ulaşabileceğimi anladım. 18 yaş üstü olduğumu onaylıyorum. Bu çalışmaya katılmak için serbestçe ve gönüllü olarak izin veriyorum. Bu belgenin imzalı bir kopyasını alacağım.

Katılımcının imzası / Rızası: _____ Tarih: _____

İsim/ Soy İsim: _____

ARAŞTIRMACININ BİLDİRİMİ

Önerilen araştırmanın içeriği katılımcı ile paylaşılmıştır. Katılımcı araştırmanın önemini, yarar ve riskleri anlamıştır. Araştırmaya katılma konusunda özgürce izin verme ve reddetme yeteneğine sahiptir.

İmza _____ Tarih: _____

İsim / Soy İsim: ___ Benil Mostafa _____

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent Form (English)



Columbia University (New York, NY)

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Perceptions and Experiences of Turkish Teachers and Administrators
Regarding “Harmonization” of Syrian Refugee Students in the Province of Bursa

Investigator: Benil Mostafa, Graduate Student, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University

Principal Investigator: Lara Nettelfield, the Director of Graduate Studies, M.A. in Human Rights Studies, Columbia University

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to gain a contextual understanding of the perceptions and experiences of Turkish teachers and administrators about harmonization/ integration of Syrian students in the Bursa province and to unearth the strategies that the school staff employ to facilitate the integration process. The results of this interview will be used for the thesis project.

RISKS

The risks associated with this study have been minimized to the extent possible. If at any time during this interview you feel distressed or uncomfortable, the interviewer can stop the interview.

BENEFITS

You may or may not receive personal (direct) benefit from taking part in this study. However, the information collected from this research may help others in the future. The possible benefits of taking part in this study include:

1) Increased awareness of your needs and challenges; 2) Increased awareness of the situation in your province and district; 3) Provision of support from the local/ provincial authorities; 4) Revised policies to meet the needs of the vulnerable group (e.g. refugees).

PROCEDURES

Your participation will take approximately one hour. You may refuse to answer a question at any point in this

interview. Interviews will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy when writing up the study’s findings. The researcher is the only person who will listen to the tapes but principal investigator and/or thesis advisor may have access to the transcriptions and field notes. All the names of participants, including the names of the schools, will be coded and disguised.

Please initial here that you authorize the researcher to tape this interview.

YES _____ NO _____

If at any point during this interview you would like to stop, please inform the interviewer. After this interview, if you decide that you would like the recording be destroyed, you have the right to pursue such a request.

OTHER INFORMATION

The attribution given to you as an interview subject will be at your discretion. Please check below.

1. I give the researcher permission to quote my interview but on the condition that my name is disguised. This means that final research products will not include the name of the interviewee.

YES _____ NO _____

2. The researcher may identify me as a teacher/ school administrator.

YES _____ NO _____

3. The researcher may use the content of this interview for background purposes only.

YES _____ NO _____

PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. There are no payments associated with this study. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. I may withdraw your participation at my professional discretion. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If at any time you have questions regarding the research or your participation, please contact the investigator, Benil Mostafa, via telephone email: bm2792@columbia.edu. You may also contact the principal investigator, Lara Nettelfield, at: ljn9@columbia.edu. If you have any questions about your rights or responsibilities as a research participant, please contact the Columbia University Human Research Protection Office at: Phone 212-851-7040; Email askirb@columbia.edu.

PARTICIPANT'S STATEMENT

I have read the above-mentioned purpose, procedures, risks and other information, and understand my role in participating in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later, about the research or my rights as a research participant, I can contact the investigator and/or institutions listed above.

I certify that I am over 18 years of age and freely give my consent to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this document for personal records.

Subject's signature/consent: _____ Date: _____

Name/ Last Name: _____

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I have discussed the proposed research with the participant. And in my opinion, the participant understands the benefits and risks, and is capable of freely consenting to participate in the research.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Print Name: Benil Mostafa

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol for Teachers (English)

Interview Protocol (For Teachers)

Introduction

Hello! My name is Benil Mostafa, a Human Rights Master's student at Columbia University in New York. I would like to gather some information from you in order to better understand the experiences and perceptions of Turkish teachers and administrators regarding the integration of Syrian refugee students into public schools. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. I am planning to record our conversation; may I request your permission?

Interview Questions:

- How long have you been a teacher?
- How many Syrian refugee students do you have in your classroom?
- Do you usually know the names of your students? How about the Syrian students' names?
- Could you tell me what it's like to be a teacher of both native and refugee students?
- What does harmonization/integration mean to you?
- How can schools help foster the process?
- Do you have any knowledge about education for refugee children?
- Have you received any support or guidance from the government? If so, what kinds?
- Have you received an in-service training to teach refugee students? If yes, what was the content of it? If not, what kind of training would benefit you?
- How comfortable are you having Syrian students in your classroom?
- Have you experienced any challenges to integrate your Syrian students? What kinds?
- Have you overcome these challenges? How?
- Could you cite an example of your teaching and classroom strategies that fostered the integration process?
- What do you think worked best to foster social cohesion between refugee and local students in your classrooms or outside the classroom settings? Any examples?
- How would you describe the attitudes of Turkish students toward Syrian peers? Any discrimination? If so, what did you do when you were faced with that?
- How successful are Syrian students in their classes in comparison to their Turkish peers?
- Have you ever heard a complaint from Turkish parents about Syrian students being integrated into the schools?
- Is there any type of support you need from the local or national government?
- What kinds of support do you need from the authorities to meet your own needs in order to better integrate Syrian students?

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol for Administrators (English)

Interview Protocol (For Administrators)

Introduction

Hello! My name is Benil Mostafa, a Human Rights Master's student at Columbia University in New York. I would like to gather some information from you in order to better understand the experiences and perceptions of Turkish teachers and administrators regarding the integration of Syrian refugee students into public schools. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. I am planning to record our conversation; may I request your permission?

Interview Questions:

- How long have you been holding an administrative position? In this school?
- How many Syrian refugee students do you have in your school?
- When was the first enrolment of Syrian refugee students in your school?
- What does harmonization/ integration mean to you?
- How can schools help foster the process?
- Have you encountered any challenges to integrate Syrian students? If so, what kinds?
- Have you overcome these challenges? How?
- Was there any Turkish language course for Syrian refugee children in your school? If yes, when was it established?
- Were there any social cohesion projects or programs at your school? If so, what kinds? Please provide examples.
- Have you received any support or guidance from the government to integrate Syrian students into the school system and culture? If so, what kinds? If not, what did you do?
- Have you received any training to address the needs of Syrian refugee students? If so, what kind? Duration? Was it helpful? If not, would it benefit you and teachers?
- Based on your observations, how do teachers treat Syrian students?
- Do you think the teachers in your school are qualified to teach students with refugee backgrounds? Why?
- How do you think Syrian students are harmonized in the school climate and community?
- Is there any type of support you need from the government?
- What kinds of support do you need from the authorities to meet your own needs in order to better integrate Syrian students and to support the teachers?

Appendix 6: Post-Observation Checklist Protocol

| Elements of Lesson | Yes or No | Evidence (be as detailed as possible) |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| All students had textbooks? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher allowed peer to peer support? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher walked around the room? | Yes / No | |
| Syrian and Turkish students sit together? | Yes / No | |
| Girls and boys sit together? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher created moments of classroom discussions? | Yes / No | |
| The teaching was student-centered? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher called on students by their names? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher knows the names of Syrian students? | Yes / No | |
| Teacher called on Turkish and Syrian students equally? | Yes / No | |
| Syrian students responded to teacher's questions? | Yes / No | |
| Syrian students asked questions? | Yes / No | |
| Syrian students are dispersed across the classroom. | Yes / No | |
| Syrian students attentively listened to the lesson. | Yes / No | |
| Teacher asked clear questions. | Yes / No | |
| Teacher checked for student comprehension. | Yes / No | |
| Teacher was patient with students. | Yes / No | |
| Teacher responded to problems between children. | Yes / No | |
| All students had school uniforms. | Yes / No | |
| All Syrian students had school uniforms. | Yes / No | |